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Panther Sports News

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Sept. 4, 1985

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CHARLESTON, IL--'Brighten O'Brien', a \$450,000 athletic fund raising campaign to improve facilities at O'Brien Stadium, was announced today (September 4) by Eastern Illinois University officials.

'Brighten O'Brien' is the second capital improvement project of Eastern's Tenth Decade Campaign aimed at raising \$5 million in five years.

Jim Edgar, Illinois Secretary of State and an EIU alumnus, is National Chairman of the six month drive.

Primary improvements include \$180,000 to install a new artificial track and \$150,000 for lights. Plans also call for renovation and expansion of the pressbox, artificial turf on the football field sidelines, a new flagpole and operations revenue for general upkeep.

"The O'Brien Stadium facility provides a means for the University to fulfill its mission of serving the people of this region by providing a site to host the state tack meets and other area high school activities plus being able to entertain the public through quality intercollegiate athletic event," said President Stanley Rives.

"These capital improvements will only enhance that mission. I believe this campaign is an important project within the framework of our Tenth Decade campaign," Rives said.

"This will not only benefit the football program but will improve the track facilities which will assist the University in retaining the high school state track meets. Those meets are a tremendous recruitment tool for the entire University, and have a strong economic impact on Eastern and the surrounding communities," said EIU Athletic Director R. C. Johnson.

Two year pledges will be accepted, according to Johnson, however installation of the track will begin next June. "I also plan to have the lights up and the

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pressbox renovated by next fall.

"By installing lights we'll have the option to play at night to avoid conflicts with major TV games or the University of Illinois . . . plus give us some relief from the hot afternoons early in the season," said Johnson.

Besides Edgar, other campaign steering committee members are Murray Choate and J. W. Oglesby of Charleston, Roger Dettro and Dan Marvin of Mattoon, Dave Musgrave and Allan Heath of Robinson, Frank Vala and Al 'Sonny' Greco of Springfield, Carl Koerner of Effingham and Ray Suddarth of Fairfield.